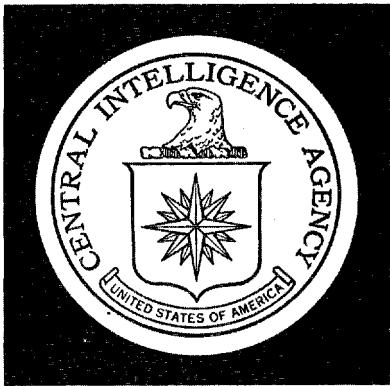


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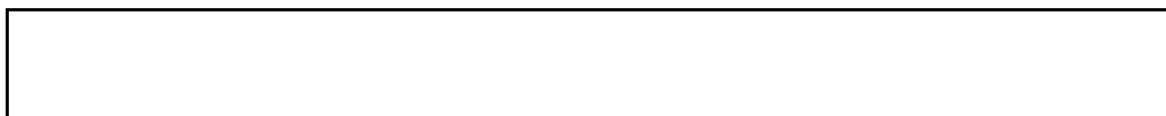
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C South Vietnam: Maneuvering among South Vietnam's political groupings--set off by President Thieu's plans to restructure the political order--has yet to produce any clear-cut trend.

While many politicians initially gave cautious support to Thieu's announcement of 7 April that he intended to head a new progovernment political organization, most leaders have withheld firm commitments. Some of these leaders are waiting until Thieu's plans have taken better shape--others are hoping to obtain promises of position and power. At least several influential personalities, including some close to Thieu, have voiced concern that the new organization could develop into an authoritarian apparatus similar to the infamous Can Lao Party of President Diem.

The political ferment sparked by Thieu's announcement nevertheless has led to mergers of some political groups and to the appearance of new groups seeking a place in the future power structure. There are suggestions that some opposition forces may close ranks in the hope of coalescing into the "loyal opposition" suggested by Thieu.

Thieu has drawn fire from some quarters where he is accused of a lack of tolerance of dissent despite his pledge to allow a real opposition to operate. The government's recently heavy-handed treatment of the press will fuel this criticism and may undercut some of the favorable impact of Thieu's earlier initiative. Last week's closing of Saigon's most prestigious vernacular paper was especially ill-timed inasmuch as the powerful senator who published it had just indicated his willingness to back Thieu's proposals.]

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Ground fighting remained generally light throughout the country over the weekend. Indications are that the Communists are currently evaluating the results of their spring campaign. The Da Nang Airbase and nearby Marble Mountain Air Facility were struck by Communist 122-mm. rocket fire late last night, the second shelling of Da Nang in the past four days, and the sixth since 23 February. At least ten rockets hit the airfields, killing two Americans and wounding 51 others. Property damage was light.

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North Korea: Pyongyang's light propaganda coverage thus far of the EC-121 shootdown probably reflects the realization that it is not receiving international support for its claims.

The sparse coverage on the incident in the North Korean press and radio seems geared primarily to further the regime's domestic goals. A statement by Defense Minister Choe Hyon and an editorial in the party newspaper both interpret the 15 April incident as further proof that the Korean people must prepare themselves "more thoroughly" politically and ideologically to carry out the party's program. The North Koreans have not yet made any specific reference to the US announcement that it will resume reconnaissance flights and send a task force to Korean waters.

Only three Communist states--East Germany, North Vietnam, and Cuba--have given full support to Pyongyang's claims that the EC-121 violated North Korean airspace. Articles from Belgrade, Warsaw, and Bucharest describe US flights as "near" or "in the region of" North Korean borders. Peking has made no comment on the incident, and Albania, Peking's close ally, did not even mention North Korea when commenting on Nixon's press conference. Moscow still has made no authoritative commentary on the attack, and this, combined with Soviet co-operation in searching for survivors, is almost certainly interpreted by Pyongyang as disapproval of its conduct.

The Japanese Government has strongly supported the US position and publicly censured Pyongyang. Cabinet Secretary Hori stated that Japanese security requires these reconnaissance flights, and he dismissed opposition charges that President Nixon's order to protect the flights would heighten tension, saying that protection would prevent further incidents.

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Czechoslovakia: Student dissidence may present new party first secretary Husak with his first crisis.

The students--mostly at the university level--apparently are incensed by Husak's stern and foreboding central committee speech, which the news media finally publicized on 19 April. They are planning nonviolent demonstrations. Husak warned that under his administration no demonstrations or strikes would be tolerated, and that strong measures, including police action, would be justified to terminate "illegal" public dissidence.

Husak may face widespread civil unrest, however, if he orders the police to intervene and forcibly disperse students on their own campuses. The workers, who sympathize with the students, reportedly promised earlier that they would call a general strike if the regime took harsh reprisals against nonviolent demonstrations.

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Dominican Republic: [The recent rise in terrorism, coupled with opposition fears that President Balaguer may run again in 1970, is stirring up a political storm.]

[Parties and leaders across the political spectrum are attacking the administration. An official communiqué of the major opposition Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD), published on 17 April, called for all political organizations to oppose terrorism and Balaguer's plans for re-election with "total abstention from the 1970 elections." The PRD parliamentary bloc, with nearly one third of the legislature's seats, withdrew from congress last week. The two other major opposition parties, the moderately leftist Revolutionary Social Christian Party and the far rightist Democratic Quisqueyan Party, also published hard-hitting attacks on the government, alleging the administration has at times instigated violence.]

[Ex-president Rafael Bonnelly has also publicly appealed to Balaguer not to run in 1970. One of the capital's major dailies echoed the appeal. Other political organizations, including Communist factions, have also published protests.]

[President Balaguer is reportedly drafting a speech in response to the terrorism and political attacks but, in view of his sharp replies to opposition charges last week, his speech is unlikely to have any immediate calming effect. The anniversary of the revolt of 24 April 1965 will spark inevitable rumors and also help keep tensions high.]

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Chile: The armed forces once again are being drawn into political controversy.

A routine request for Senate approval of the promotion of Alfredo Mahn from brigadier to major general has been opposed by the Socialist Party. The Socialists object to Mahn because he presided at a military court that sentenced a Socialist senator to jail in 1968 for defaming the armed forces. The Socialists claim that Mahn acted under pressure from the government, which in turn was influenced by "North American interests." The administration has rejected these charges.

The Socialist position on the promotion will force Communist and Radical senators to choose between the Socialists and the military. The Communists in particular have been careful to maintain friendly relations with the armed forces because they fear repression if the military should take an active interest in politics.

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UK-Europe: [The UK Foreign Office official in charge of European integration affairs has denied that there is any change in British opposition to acceptance of a free trade area or a commercial arrangement with the Six of the Communities. He said that recent conversations of both Prime Minister Wilson and Foreign Minister Stewart had shown that Britain would not be sidetracked from its objective of full membership in the Common Market. In Stewart's conversation with French Foreign Minister Debre last week, Debre had shown no interest in pursuing a dialogue at the present time with the British on the future of Europe.]

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Philippines: [Top officials are voicing long-held private doubts about the effectiveness of SEATO apparently in the hope of influencing the May ministerial meeting. President Marcos and Foreign Secretary Romulo have stated recently that the Philippines favors a stronger regional organization. Presumably they would like to cull out France and Pakistan as inactive SEATO members and perhaps to include such nations as South Korea, Taiwan, and Japan. Marcos' and Romulo's remarks, however, probably are principally designed to obtain assurances of a US post-Vietnam military commitment in Southeast Asia.]

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